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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

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18 November 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Planning Modern Operations

1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". This article discusses the question of how best to plan the initial operations of ground forces under circumstances in which it is not known in advance whether combat actions will be initiated with the use of nuclear weapons or only conventional weapons. The formulation of separate plans is discouraged for the simple reason that troops are unable to prepare simultaneously for two different variants. Instead it is proposed that an operation be planned so that all direct troop preparation is accomplished according to a single plan which would ensure that troops would be ready to go over to the offensive either with or without the use of nuclear weapons. This article appeared in Issue No. 2 (87) for 1969.

2. Because the source of this report is extremely sensitive, this document should be handled on a strict need-to-know basis within recipient agencies. For ease of reference, reports from this publication have been assigned the [redacted] Codeword [redacted]

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William E. Nelson
Deputy Director for Operations

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Intelligence Information Special Report

COUNTRY USSR

FIRDB - 312/03848-74

DATE OF INFO. Mid-1969

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SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Planning Modern Operations

SOURCE Documentary

Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 2 (87) for 1969 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". The author of this article is Colonel G. Yefimov. This article discusses the question of how best to plan the initial operations of ground forces under circumstances in which it is not known in advance whether combat actions will be initiated with the use of nuclear weapons or only conventional weapons. The formulation of separate plans is discouraged for the simple reason that troops are unable to prepare simultaneously for two different variants. Instead it is proposed that an operation be planned so that all direct troop preparation is accomplished according to a single plan which would ensure that troops would be ready to go over to the offensive either with or without the use of nuclear weapons. End of Summary

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Comment:

Colonel G. Yefimov has had several articles in the Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought" and Military Thought: "The Need for Self-Propelled Mortars", Issue No. 3 (82) for 1967. "The Question of Planning Modern Operations", Issue No. 2 (87) for 1969. "From the Experience of Operational Training of the Troops of Air Defense of the Country", Issue No. 3 (88) for 1969. (FIRDB-312/00369-74) "Determining the Norms for Stocking and Expending Artillery Ammunition", Issue No. 3 (91) for 1970. (FIRDB-312/01290-74) "The Role of Cities in Armed Combat", Issue No. 3, March 1971. The SECRET version of Military Thought was published three times annually and was distributed down to the level of division commander. It reportedly ceased publication at the end of 1970.

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The Question of Planning Modern Operations

by

Colonel G. Yefimov

Lately there have been many discussions in periodicals* and in military-scientific conferences and exercises on the question of how best to plan the initial operations of ground forces under circumstances in which it is not known in advance whether combat actions will be initiated with the use of nuclear weapons or with the use of only conventional weapons. Are the front and armies formulating one plan for the operation which satisfies the requirements of conducting both nuclear and non-nuclear warfare, or are they formulating two plans?

During these discussions it was proposed specifically to plan an entire front operation according to a single plan for conditions of nuclear war, and for the depth of the immediate mission of the front and for the initial army operations to have, in addition, a variant in the event only conventional means of destruction are used. There was some discussion that a front and the armies should develop two plans for the operation simultaneously: one for conditions in which the operation is conducted with the massive use of nuclear weapons; and another in which only conventional weapons are used, but nuclear weapons are held in readiness.

But neither proposal, in our view, is acceptable, if only because troops are unable to simultaneously prepare for two different variants. They can occupy only certain concentration areas and deployment lines, and breakthrough sectors must be precisely defined and stipulated by one plan. Otherwise confusion in their actions is inevitable from the very beginning of the operation.

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*Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought'', No. 3 (82), 1967, No. 1 (83), 1968

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How can we achieve a situation wherein troops can go over to the offensive practically at any moment, using any means of destruction?

In answer to this question we will compare the distinctive features of two variants of the commencement of war: nuclear and non-nuclear. This will permit singling out the overall principal regularities and requirements of direct troop preparation after the completion of which they would be able to go over to the offensive immediately and, on one signal, to go into action as required for a nuclear war or, on a second signal, to go into action as required in an operation being launched with conventional means of destruction.

For the sake of convenience we shall analyze some of the basic elements of an army operation. It is known that more strike axes and breakthrough sectors are planned in an operation with the use of nuclear weapons than without them. In the first case an army may mount an offensive on two or three axes, but in the second case, only on one or two. A division, accordingly, will break through enemy defenses in two sectors, or only one. Taking this into account, in planning it is first desirable to designate the strike axes and the breakthrough sectors for the non-nuclear variant of the commencement of war, and then, for the nuclear variant, to select the additionally required number of strike axes and breakthrough sectors. It can be seen from the attached diagram that in the nuclear variant of the commencement of war an army delivers strikes on three axes: on the main one with two divisions, and on the others with one division each. In the non-nuclear variant, however, the troops go over to the offensive on two axes, having three divisions on the main axis and two divisions on the other one, which ensures the necessary superiority over the enemy on each axis. A similar grouping of combined-arms large units and their tasks more completely ensures the immediate transition to the offensive according to the nuclear and non-nuclear variants.

The use of rocket troops and artillery, as well as the other arms of troops, is organized on planned axes. In this case, part of the artillery, including that artillery drawn from second echelon large units, plus the required subunits of reconnaissance and engineer troops under cover of combined-arms units and subunits, may be brought ahead of time to the breakthrough sectors designated for the non-nuclear variant.

In our proposed planning method, certain difficulties are posed, of course, by the selection of optimum departure areas for the first echelon troops, from which they must be ready to go over to the offensive in either

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a nuclear or non-nuclear commencement of war. However, surmounting these difficulties is facilitated by the fact that the majority of large units will go over to the offensive from the march.

The main strike, as is known, is more advantageously delivered by the massive use of nuclear weapons against the main enemy grouping, but, if conventional weapons are used, it should be delivered against the weak sectors of his defenses. However, it must not be stereotyped. From the experience of World War II we know of numerous examples in which the main strike was delivered where the enemy had the strongest defenses. At one time conflicting views were expressed in regard to the main strike in operations employing nuclear weapons. The desirability of delivering such a strike on axes where the main enemy forces were concentrated was substantiated in certain instances, while, on the other hand, the advantage of delivering the main strike against the weakest sector of enemy defenses was demonstrated in others. Both methods were supported by sufficiently compelling arguments. All this supports the affirmation that the axes of main and other strikes may differ slightly in an offensive in which nuclear weapons are used or not used. This is very important in formulating a single plan for an operation for the coordination of its nuclear and non-nuclear variants.

The width of the offensive zone of operational formations, in any case, in the first days of the operation will be the same for an offensive with or without nuclear weapons, since the number of fronts and armies advancing in a given theater of war is constant in the initial period for all conditions. During the operation, however, the width of the offensive zones and the boundaries of these operational formations can be defined more exactly, depending on the situation. Similar modifications took place during World War II and in many post-war exercises.

It is somewhat more complicated to assign boundaries and offensive zones to divisions. They will change sharply depending on the number of divisions committed to the engagement of the first day of the operation. Therefore, certain boundaries should be assigned if the operation is begun with the use of nuclear weapons, and others when these weapons are not employed.

The substance of the missions of operational formations will differ depending on whether nuclear weapons are used or not. In the first instance the destruction of the main enemy forces usually will be accomplished with massive nuclear strikes delivered simultaneously in the whole depth of his operational disposition, but in the non-nuclear period

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it will be carried out only by consecutive strikes by artillery, aviation, tank, and motorized infantry throughout the operation. The time required for accomplishing the missions will likewise vary. For example, in a 350 to 400 kilometer depth of an army operation, its duration might be 4 to 5 days with the use of nuclear weapons, but 6 to 8 days, or even somewhat longer, without them.

Certain difficulties arise in the planning of materiel-technical support. For example, in an army operation in which nuclear weapons are not used, the troop artillery munitions requirements might be twice as high as in an operation using nuclear weapons. This raises the question of how to plan troop support and what supplies to set up if it is not known in advance how the operation will begin. Obviously, it is necessary to calculate for support of maximum requirements.

Guided by the above recommendations, an operation can be planned so that all direct troop preparation is accomplished according to a single plan which does not depend on how the war will begin. In this case, the troops always will be ready to go over to the offensive either with or without the use of nuclear weapons, and this is the main requirement under modern conditions. However, in various theaters and in different staffs, the question of how many variants of the plan for the operation must be formulated may be decided individually. But this is not the crux of the matter. Something else is important, namely that a single plan or two plans ensure the direct preparation of troops for the operation and their immediate transition to the offensive in either nuclear or non-nuclear war without any regroupings or pauses.

In periodicals and at the 17th Military-Scientific Conference at the Military Academy i/n M. V. Frunze, the importance of the wide use of tank forces in the transition period from non-nuclear actions to nuclear ones for the fullest exploitation of the results of the first and successive nuclear strikes was quite correctly stated. However, it should be kept in mind that in recent years the antitank weapons of the probable enemy have developed rapidly and have been supplied to troops in large numbers. Therefore, the use of tank formations and large units in the first echelon in the non-nuclear period, obviously should be carefully planned, so that by the beginning of nuclear war they will not have sustained serious losses.

It has become imminently necessary to more precisely define the concept of the time, or the lines from which "the changeover of the sides

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to the use of nuclear weapons is most probable". This often is written about in various works and articles proposing to plan troop preparation for nuclear actions based on the attainment of these lines. As is known, the decision to use nuclear weapons is made by the highest political authority and will depend, not on the situation of troops in the zone of some operational formation or other, but on the overall military-political conditions and the situation of groupings of armed forces on the main strategic axes of the principal theater of military operations, or of all of them. From this it follows that it is undesirable to base the time for the transition from non-nuclear to nuclear actions on the attainment by the troops of one line or another. It is sounder, in our view, to proceed from the need to maintain all troops in constant readiness throughout the operation for the transition to combat actions with the use of nuclear weapons at any moment, since this currently is accepted during operational training, exercises, and war games.

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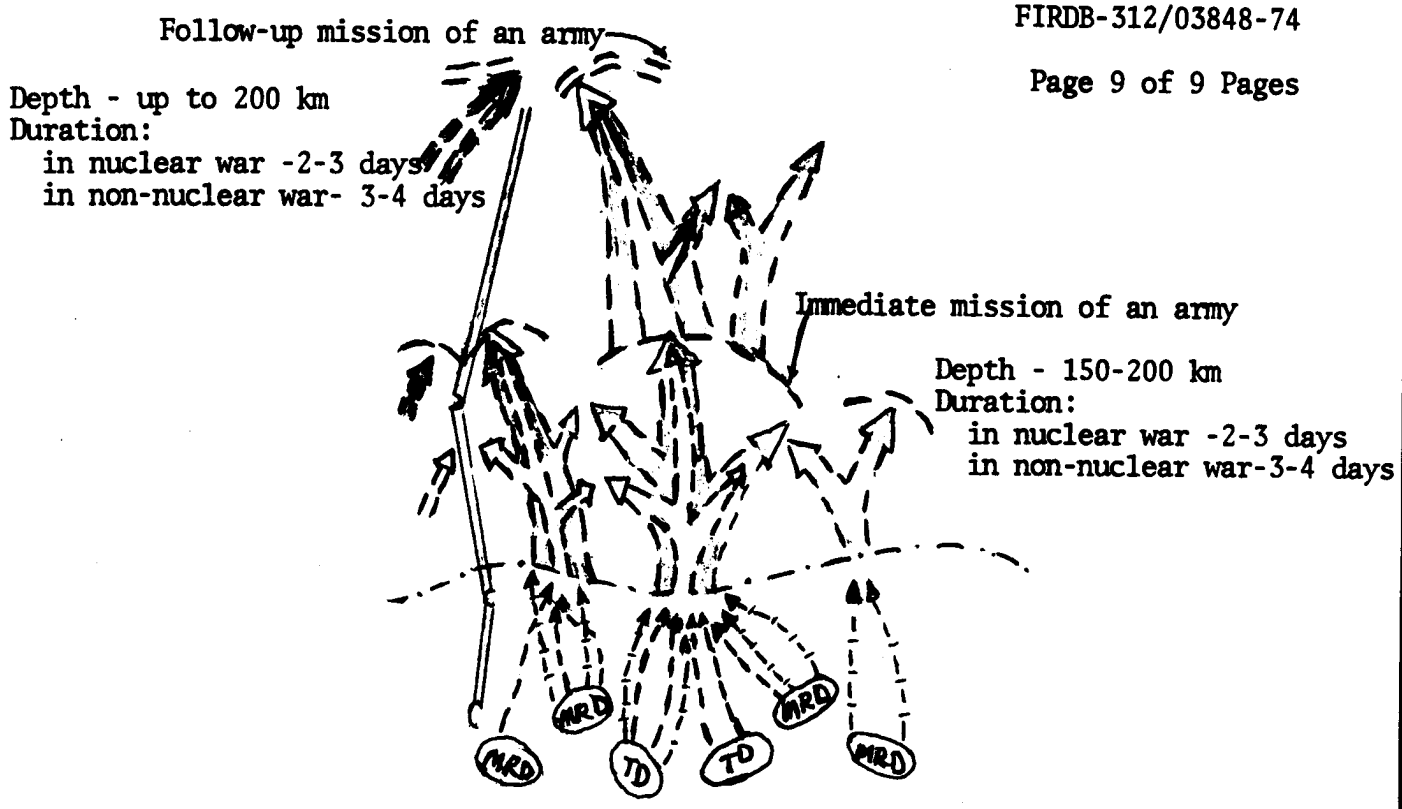

LEGEND

Routes of troop advance and the axes of strikes in an operation commencing with the use of nuclear weapons

The same, with use of only conventional weapons

MRD-Motorized Rifle Division
TD-Tank Division

Diagram of an army offensive operation

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